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Input from the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development*

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Bangkok from 29 to 31 March 2017, to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

* Late submission owing to the timing of the Forum.

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Report of the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

[Original: Chinese, English, French and Russian]

Summary

The Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was held in Bangkok from 29 to 31 March 2017. The Forum discussed regional perspectives and priorities on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on the topic of poverty eradication and the promotion of prosperity. The discussions included an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17, which constitute the cluster of Goals to be discussed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017. National perspectives from countries participating in the voluntary national reviews were shared. The Forum also addressed the role that gender equality and women's empowerment can play across the three dimensions of sustainable development; revised lessons and experiences across cities on localized action for eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity; and discussed the way in which multilateral trade, investment, technology and innovation flows, and access to data and statistics can support implementation, monitoring and reporting of the progress on the targets.

The Forum also discussed means to strengthen implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region and within this context, it adopted the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, with a focus on the practical means of implementation and the priority thematic areas of social development, disaster risk reduction, climate change, management of natural resources, connectivity and energy, as well as implementation arrangements and a progress-tracking process.

1. The Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was held in Bangkok from 29 to 31 March 2017.

2. It was attended by more than 500 participants, including representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies, international organizations, civil society organizations and other entities.

3. The Forum was attended by representatives of the following ESCAP members: Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Fiji; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kiribati; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Turkey; Turkmenistan; United States of America; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam. A representative of Switzerland attended as an observer.

4. Under agenda item 1 (a), the Chair of the Third Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, Mr. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera, Minister of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Sri Lanka, made a statement on the outcome of the Third Forum. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered a welcome statement and provided an overview of the Forum. Statements were also delivered by Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, and Mr. Nabeel Munir, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council. Ms. Helen Hakena and Mr. Amit Timilsina delivered statements on behalf of civil society.

5. Under agenda item 1 (b), the Forum elected the following Bureau members:

(a) Chair:

Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary (Pakistan)

(b) Vice-Chairs:

Mr. Thinley Namgyel (Bhutan)
Mr. Semi Koroilavesau (Fiji)
Mr. Subandi Sardjoko (Indonesia)
Ms. Zhyldyz Polotova (Kyrgyzstan)
Mr. Min Bahadur Shrestha (Nepal)
Mr. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera (Sri Lanka)
Mr. Arjuna Sujeewa Senasinghe (Sri Lanka)
Mr. Ezizgeldi Annamuhammedov (Turkmenistan)

(c) Rapporteur:

Ms. Rosemarie G. Edillon (Philippines)

6. Under agenda item 1 (c), the Forum adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the Forum:

(a) Opening statements;

(b) Election of officers;

(c) Adoption of the agenda.

2. Regional perspectives on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

(a) Global to regional context of follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and implications for the Asia-Pacific region;

(b) Assessment of progress in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level;

(c) National progress and achievements with respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Strengthening implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region:

(a) Strengthening implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region;

(b) Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific;

(c) Form and function of the Forum.

4. Other matters.

5. Review and adoption of the draft report of the Forum.

6. Closing of the Forum.

7. Under agenda item 2 (a), the Executive Secretary delivered a presentation on regional progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8. Under agenda item 2 (b), a panel addressed regional perspectives and trends in relation to the theme of the Forum, "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific".

9. Under the same agenda item, the Forum was informed of key recommendations from six round tables which conducted an in-depth review of the Sustainable Development Goals in the cluster to be addressed at the forthcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council.[1]

10. Under agenda item 2 (c), the Asia-Pacific countries participating in voluntary national reviews with regard to the high-level political forums on sustainable development in 2016 and 2017 shared national perspectives on progress and achievements relating to the 2030 Agenda.

11. Under agenda item 3 (a), the Forum was informed of three panel discussions, which were on the topics "Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls: a pathway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals", "Experiences and lessons on localizing the Sustainable Development Goals", and "Strengthening the delivery of the means of implementation".

12. Under agenda item 3 (b), the Forum adopted the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, as contained in annex II to the present document, for consideration by the Commission, with a view to endorsing it at the seventy-third session of the Commission.

13. Under agenda item 3 (c), the Forum adopted the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, as contained in annex III to the present document, for consideration by the Commission, with a view to endorsing it at the seventy-third session of the Commission.

14. Under agenda item 4, no other matters were discussed.

[1] The full summaries and recommendations from the round tables are available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/E/ESCAPFSD(4)CRP1_0.pdf.

15. Under agenda item 5, the Forum adopted the present report and its annexes on 31 March 2017. The Chair's summary of the Forum is contained in annex I to the present document.

16. The Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership between ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme was launched, as were its data portal and knowledge products: *Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Outlook* and the thematic report "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific". Other knowledge products that were launched at the Forum included "South-South in Action: Sustainability in Thailand — Experience for Developing Countries", which was jointly authored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation; while the Asia-Pacific launch of the *United Nations World Water Development Report 2017 — Wastewater: The Untapped Resource*, which was coordinated by the World Water Assessment Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization under UN-Water, was held as part of the commemorations for World Water Day.

17. Side events were held on the following topics: "The importance of civil registration and vital statistics to eradicate poverty in Asia and the Pacific"; "Technology and sustainability (Global Conference on CyberSpace 2017 — Destination India)"; "Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction for poverty eradication in Asia and the Pacific"; "Migration: a critical factor for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific"; "New platforms for civil society engagement with Governments for realizing the 2030 Agenda"; "Including persons with disabilities in sustainable development: an inclusive pathway to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity"; "Sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality: crucial to eradicating poverty in Asia and the Pacific"; "The contribution of family farming to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia"; and "Regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region for Sustainable Development Goal implementation in developing and least developed countries". A voluntary national review learning café was also held.

18. The following preparatory events were held: the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Organization Forum on Sustainable Development; Asia-Pacific Conference: Taking Collective Action to Accelerate Transformation of Official Statistics for the 2030 Agenda; ESCAP/United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability workshop on multi-stakeholder partnerships for Sustainable Development Goal implementation in Asia and the Pacific; and ESCAP/Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations regional preparatory workshop for voluntary national review countries from the Asia-Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia regions.

19. The Forum concluded that the present report, including its annexes, should be brought to the attention of the Commission, at its seventy-third session, and to the global dialogues on sustainable development, including in particular the upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development which will be held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017.

Annex I

Chair's summary of discussions at the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The theme of the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia-Pacific". During the Forum, members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), intergovernmental bodies, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, major groups and other stakeholders engaged in a dialogue on regional perspectives on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region, including an in-depth review of the theme and of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17, which constituted the cluster of Goals to be discussed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017. The Forum also discussed means to strengthen implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

I. Regional perspectives on the theme of the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

2. During the session, a panel reflected on key challenges in eradicating poverty and achieving shared prosperity in Asia and the Pacific and on the responses that had been put forward by Governments, international organizations and civil society.

3. The Forum noted the creation of national bodies to mainstream and implement the 2030 Agenda. The majority of the bodies were interministerial and cross-sectoral in nature and some included non-governmental stakeholders such as civil society and academia. It was pointed out that key national strategies and development plans had already been aligned with the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, while some delegations reported the introduction of mapping exercises to match responsibility for the Goals with relevant ministries.

4. The Forum noted efforts to define national indicators and to establish nationwide processes for data collection to monitor progress on achieving the Goals, and highlighted the importance of localizing the Goals and tailoring interventions to the specific needs of households that were being left behind. Several delegations mentioned the important role of youth and women in promoting the implementation of the Goals. The Forum noted the efforts of two delegations in drafting their voluntary national reviews for the 2017 high-level political forum and of one delegation in tabling a sustainable development act.

5. Interventions from international organizations highlighted that effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals depended on mainstreaming nature-based solutions and that well-managed ecosystems could contribute to eradicating poverty. Interventions from civil society stressed the challenges posed by increasing inequality and disproportionate investment priorities that compromised the rights of local populations and could derail progress in achieving the Goals. The realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, as outlined in the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, was stressed as a prerequisite to leaving no one behind.

II. In-depth review of the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals

6. The Forum conducted an in-depth review of six of the seven Sustainable Development Goals that would be the focus of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017, in line with the General Assembly resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, and developed specific recommendations on the following: (a) addressing systemic challenges that were barriers to further progress; (b) priorities for strengthening policy coherence in implementation efforts, including through attention to key leverage points; (c) areas for regional cooperation to address the transboundary dimensions of those Goals and challenges; and (d) promising innovations (policy, social, institutional, technological or other) at the national level.

7. The conclusions of each round table, including the wide range of specific recommendations made, were shared in a plenary session with reports delivered by the rapporteurs of each round table (available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/EESCAPFSD(4)CRP1_0.pdf).

8. A joint statement by civil society organizations called on States to take concrete actions to address the root causes and consequences of poverty, inequality, discrimination, violence and injustice and to build regional cooperation to that end. Regional trends and systemic barriers that were not in line with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals were highlighted, including land grabs; increased military spending; territorial, resource and ethnic conflicts; violence against women and girls; and displacement of farmers and indigenous communities. Shrinking civil society space would prevent successful implementation of the Goals. Policy and institutional coherence were interlinked, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism should provide coherent support and civil society engagement.

9. Regional cooperation and action to enable development justice was supported by the statements made by the representatives of persons with disabilities and of fisherfolk communities. The opportunity to address barriers and inequalities due to disability, faced by one sixth of the regional population, through regional and global frameworks was emphasized. Participation, partnerships, awareness-raising, enabling regulations to protect rights and access to marine resources, and strengthened policy coherence at all levels were also urged, together with action to address the wide range of economic activities that decreased the income of small-scale fisherfolk, marginalized artisanal fishing and promoted migration and displacement. Mainstreaming the nature-based concept would support implementation and tackle the most pressing issues such as food and water security, disasters and climate change.

III. National progress and achievements with respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

10. The session highlighted national perspectives from countries participating in the voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and provided an opportunity to exchange views on how member States were overcoming challenges, including alignment of national development plans, development aid programmes and institutional mandates through interministerial coordination and wider engagement of all stakeholders, as well as through regional peer learning and South-South cooperation networks.

11. The Forum reiterated the importance of political commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of alignment of national development strategies, subregional plans, and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway with the 2030 Agenda through the institutional mandates of ministries and government institutions at the national, provincial and local levels.

12. The Forum noted that national efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators through an inclusive and participatory process were improving the rule of law and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, peace and governance, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples.

13. The Forum highlighted the importance of subregional and regional cooperation and the pivotal role of the Forum as a platform for follow-up and review, for peer learning through the sharing of knowledge and best practices, and for South-South cooperation.

14. Civil society organizations recommended strengthening national follow-up and review through localization of the Goal indicators and engaging stakeholders and civil society in inclusive and participatory approaches for data collection and monitoring of implementation.

IV. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls: a pathway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

15. In this session, a panel highlighted the catalytic role that gender equality and women's empowerment played across the three dimensions of sustainable development. It proposed innovative strategies and key recommendations to support gender equality and women's empowerment in strengthening implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. The Forum emphasized its commitment to gender equality, including in promoting gender-responsive policies and plans and ensuring equal opportunities with respect to education, employment, leadership, decision-making and access to health services and social protection.

17. The Forum reported on innovative partnerships and concerted efforts to ensure effective service delivery for lower-income women, as well as measures to eradicate harmful practices against children and promote global citizenship. One delegation recommended strengthening institutional capacity and raising awareness among policymakers and society, mainstreaming gender equality into legal and policy frameworks and providing education and training for women to better prepare them for the changing world of work and the application of information and communications technology.

18. Civil society organizations stressed that economic growth models were based on systematic discrimination of women in the workforce and reliance on unpaid work by women, and called for the meaningful inclusion of women in all decision-making. The inclusion of women with disabilities in initiatives at all levels was emphasized as essential to effectively respond to the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the potential of youth to dismantle discriminatory gender norms was underlined, including through the addressing of their key needs and concerns in relation to gender-transformative education and health programmes, as well as through the promotion of meaningful youth participation.

V. Experiences and lessons learned with respect to localization of the Sustainable Development Goals

19. In this session, participants discussed the significant role of local governments in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity in cities in the Asia-Pacific region. A panel of mayors stressed that successful efforts to localize the Goals took into account local developmental needs, were embedded in the local cultural, ecological and political contexts, and ultimately empowered people to take ownership of the Goals.

20. One delegation noted that local governments should focus not merely on reducing economic poverty, but on enhancing overall quality of life by building local capacities and reducing dependencies of people on the government. Another delegation noted the importance of adopting universally accepted sustainability standards for industrial processes and of promoting the use of trade and procurement as tools for enhancing the implementation of the Goals. In that regard, Governments should map their trade policies in relation to the implementation of the Goals.

21. Civil society organizations emphasized the responsibility of local governments in recognizing that older persons and persons with disabilities were equal and productive yet vulnerable citizens whose role was integral to the process of localizing the Goals. Local government associations reiterated their commitment to building local government capacities and multi-stakeholder partnerships for the implementation of inclusive, resilient, accessible and sustainable solutions in alignment with the Goals.

VI. Strengthening the delivery of the means of implementation

22. In this session, a panel drew attention to some of the main challenges currently faced by the region in harnessing different means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially to eradicate poverty and ensure prosperity. The participants highlighted ways to address those challenges and emphasized the need to exploit the synergies between different means of implementation.

23. The Forum observed that good governance and an enabling business environment were crucial in harnessing the potential of different means of implementation. Considerable synergies existed between the different means of implementation, which needed to be harnessed through coherent national policies. The Forum discussed how information and communications technology could accelerate the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in international trade, how increased public infrastructure investments could in turn promote trade and private investments, and how new technologies could generate data required to monitor implementation of the Goals.

24. The Forum recognized the importance of integrating statistical planning into national development planning and that ill-informed policies could be much more expensive than investment in data and statistics. The Forum noted that statistical capacity-building and stakeholder engagement were key challenges in implementation of Goals at the national level, and underscored the importance of prioritizing data needs at the national level, and that collecting and managing high-quality and relevant disaggregated data remained an issue.

25. One delegation requested ESCAP to continue assisting member States with the reform of public finance, including taxation and public expenditure matters. The Forum highlighted the need for the assistance of ESCAP to member States in

meeting the data requirements for the 2030 Agenda by providing technical support for national efforts to strengthen data and statistics, and urged Governments to make statistics development a national development target embedded in national development plans with the highest importance. The Forum recommended that these plans should act as a platform to identify regional priorities, key challenges and opportunities.

26. The civil society organizations recommended a more explicit recognition of fair, just and participatory trade as means of implementation within the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. They also called for a regional-level Sustainable Development Goal compatibility impact assessment of existing trade and investment agreements, and requested ESCAP to play a lead role in that process and to involve civil society organizations as partners. The major groups called for ensuring greater integration of International Labour Organization labour standards and rights as well as social dialogue into trade and investment agreements. The business community reaffirmed the important role of the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network as an important modality for the Commission to actively engage business in promoting environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive growth in the Asia-Pacific region, and supported the Asia-Pacific Business Forum as a platform to articulate strategies for promoting public-private partnerships to achieve the Goals.

VII. Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

27. The Forum considered the draft regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the draft terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

28. The Forum welcomed the inclusive and collaborative efforts to develop the road map and thanked the secretariat for supporting the process.

29. The Forum recognized the road map as a living document that served as guidelines for regional cooperation and support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

30. Civil society organizations recognized the road map's contribution and benefits to developing and least developed countries, calling for wide stakeholder participation in its implementation, and made several suggestions for future iterations to promote development justice and ensure inclusion of all marginalized groups.

Annex II

Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

A. Objectives and guidelines

1. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires national, regional and international cooperative endeavours. The aim of this regional road map is to facilitate cooperation at the regional level, supported by the secretariat and other United Nations entities through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism as appropriate.

2. The road map places particular emphasis on supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by developing countries, in particular by least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, countries in conflict situations and post-conflict countries and other countries with special needs.

3. The road map maintains the universality and transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda and takes into account different national and regional realities, capacities and levels of development, while respecting member States' national development strategies, policy space and priorities, remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments and creating no new commitments or additional reporting requirements or obligations for Governments or new mechanisms, as requested by member States at the Third Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.[a]

4. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the objective of the road map is to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through regional cooperation in a set of priority areas that support effective pursuit of sustainable development by member States.

5. The road map also aims to place gender equality and women's empowerment as a central issue of the regional policy agenda, in order to enhance women's leadership and decision-making in all aspects of society.[b]

6. The road map also recognizes that sustainable development must be underpinned by peaceful and inclusive societies, addressing inequality, and by good governance. The quality of governance and effectiveness of public institutions are critical factors to the process of sustainable development.

7. The expected impacts of the road map are as follows: (a) strengthened regional cooperation on priority issues as identified by member States; (b) continued and more efficient and coordinated support for member States provided by the secretariat, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies and regional organizations through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism; and (c) more effective knowledge-sharing among countries.

8. This road map stems from decisions of the Second and Third Asia-Pacific Forums on Sustainable Development. It is for members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and identifies opportunities to cooperate at the regional level, guided by all the principles reaffirmed and agreed to in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, as

[a] See E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4, para. 16 A. (b).

[b] Language adapted from E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/4, para. 2 (b).

provided for by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1 — in which it acknowledges the importance of the regional and subregional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development — and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

9. The regional road map contains priority areas of cooperation that could be supported using the secretariat's existing expertise and resources, drawing on input from member States and the programme of work and strategic framework. The regional road map also draws on the thematic working groups of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism and, at the national level, on input from the United Nations Development Group. The ESCAP conference structure and its ongoing activities, as well as activities of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism member organizations, will be fully utilized in an effort to avoid duplication of work and increase efficiency.

B. Priority areas of cooperation

10. Regional and subregional cooperation in specific areas can support and complement the effectiveness of national mechanisms. The means of implementation — namely finance, technology, capacity-building, trade and systemic issues — are key to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Regional discussion and cooperation, including through regional and subregional organizations,[a] can facilitate access to normative work; support capacity-building, technical cooperation and sharing of good practices and home-grown approaches, including among countries that share similar characteristics (such as least developed countries, small island developing States or middle-income countries); and facilitate member States' access to the means of implementation and efforts towards consolidating regional and global partnerships for sustainable development. Similarly, the externalities and spillover effects of many of the Sustainable Development Goals provide opportunities for regional approaches and engagement. The thematic areas of cooperation in this road map have been chosen for their multisectoral impact on sustainable development.

11. The opportunities for regional cooperation, including by leveraging regional and subregional organizations, draw upon the issues highlighted by member States within the conference structure of the Commission.

12. Member States have identified the following priority areas of cooperation, with particular emphasis on the practical means of implementation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Means of implementation and partnership

(a) Data and statistics

Current status

13. Availability and access to high-quality data and statistics are essential to measuring and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However, regional data are available for only approximately half of the defined indicators of the global monitoring framework. The multidimensional nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires integrated and disaggregated statistics that can

[a] Including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Pacific subregional organizations.

support planning and analysis across the economic, social and environmental development pillars with a particular focus on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people. Data and statistics should also be able to ensure that no one is left behind, and disaggregated data should be made more available as required by the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. In order to meet such demands, national statistical capacities to provide high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to users must be strengthened, and the capacity of Governments to utilize data and statistics for evidence-based policymaking and for follow-up and review must be enhanced, inter alia. National statistical systems therefore need to be strengthened to supply the statistical evidence necessary for monitoring of progress, integrated policy analysis and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

14. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Promote the need for national statistical systems to be responsive to the requirements of users arising from the 2030 Agenda, and the need to encourage investments in national statistical systems that are adequate to meet statistical requirements and to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as appropriate;

(b) Formulate and implement continuous, comprehensive and system-wide strategies for the development of statistics, including statistics for the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Provide and promote capacity-building support to national statistical systems to increase the availability of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including to develop integrated measurement frameworks for Sustainable Development Goal statistics that integrate data from multiple sources, including big data, in a coherent and consistent manner to support integrated analysis of sustainable development issues;

(d) Organize national statistical system business processes and modernize tools for strengthened quality, efficiency and effectiveness of statistical information management and exchange;

(e) Build the skills of the staff and management of national statistical systems, including of relevant data producers, to enhance the human resources capacity for generating the statistical products and services required for monitoring of national development plans and the 2030 Agenda.

(b) Technology

Current status

15. Science, technology and innovation can play a vital role in supporting sustainable development and driving growth and productivity. The Asia-Pacific region is characterized by large disparities across countries: while many countries rank in the bottom quartile of the Global Innovation Index, a number of member States are leaders in science, technology and innovation, accounting for almost 45 per cent of global research and development expenditure. The challenge is to bridge these gaps and address the digital divide, to enable member States, particularly countries with special needs, to take advantage of technologies and to nurture an innovative environment. Given the guidance offered by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation and the work under way on related ESCAP platforms, the use of policy on science, technology and innovation for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals can be promoted as follows.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

16. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Facilitate the sharing of best practices and capacity-building across member countries through the development of social enterprise, impact investment markets and information and communications technology in support of implementation of the Goals;

(b) Link regional needs and experience of international, regional and subregional organizations by acting as a bridge to facilitate cooperation for access to technology and know-how and joint action when necessary;

(c) Promote public, public-private and civil society partnerships, as appropriate, in order to harness science, technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.[4]

(c) Finance

Current status

17. Effective pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals requires stable forward-looking and long-term financing. However, the available financial resources are either not appropriately channelled or not sufficient to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. In 2014, Asia-Pacific developing countries mobilized 17.6 per cent of their gross domestic product in tax revenues, which is only half the average across the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries. Since these levels of public finances are insufficient to effectively pursue the Goals, it is therefore important to enhance the tax ratio while recognizing the role of cooperation among countries in the region in sharing good practices. The region's financial markets are also not developed enough to channel regional savings into productive investments in support of sustainable development needs. Besides lacking efficient financial intermediation processes for development purposes, banks in the region's developing countries provide more than two thirds of the overall financial credit, while developed countries mobilize up to 80 per cent from diversified financial vehicles such as bonds and equity. On the financial inclusion side, more than 1.1 billion people in the Asia-Pacific region are unbanked. Considerable policy adjustments are needed in terms of both reorienting available resources and identifying additional sources of financing. Bilateral or multilateral public-private partnerships to mobilize financial resources are also required, not only for infrastructure development but also for other sectors, such as education and health, including through knowledge-sharing on good practices.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

18. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Continue to undertake research, analysis and consensus-building initiatives in the area of financing for development to enhance regional knowledge of infrastructure financing, including public-private partnerships;

(b) Provide capacity-building to mainstream financing for development issues in areas such as domestic resource mobilization;[5]

(c) Enhance the capacity for domestic and international resource mobilization;

[4] See Commission resolution 72/12.

[5] See Commission resolution 72/6, para. 7 (d).

(d) Strengthen partnerships for effective development cooperation;

(e) Promote financial inclusion.

(d) Policy coherence

Current status

19. In Asia and the Pacific, high levels of economic growth have lifted great numbers of people out of poverty. However, if the region is to sustain the growth needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to enhance resilience, it must shift to a growth trajectory that is more resource-efficient and more able to meet the needs of present and future generations. Successful implementation of the Goals will require policy coherence, integrated approaches and a move away from single-sector policies and investments, which in turn will need an all-of-Government approach that promotes the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. Regional cooperation will be critical to maximize the opportunities for building synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions and to overcome the first-mover risk that may be present in terms of short-term economic competitiveness.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

20. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Develop integrated approaches, models and tools[5] with respect to each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development;

(b) Support regional approaches to the prioritization of Goal interventions through the development of policy tools, methodologies and approaches;

(c) Promote integrated policies based on systems approaches and methodologies;

(d) Promote the valuation and quantification of the co-benefits of policy action addressing interconnected Goals and targets.

(e) North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships

Current status

21. Comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require partnerships and the deployment of new solutions between countries and across subregions. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region could benefit from North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation as well as the sharing of good practices and home-grown approaches.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

22. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Build capacity in developing countries, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation;[5]

(b) Share good practices through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation,[6] including through regional platforms such as the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development;

[5] See General Assembly resolution 70/1.

[6] See Commission resolution 72/6, para. 8.

(c) Promote and scale up best practices.[h]

2. Thematic issues

(a) Leaving no one behind (social development)

Current status

23. Despite high and enduring economic growth and significant progress in terms of poverty eradication, inequality persists in the Asia-Pacific region, and in some instances has intensified. Growing disparities in income and wealth, as well as inequality of opportunity, disproportionately affect women and vulnerable groups. Currently, up to 70 per cent of the population lacks reliable access to good-quality and affordable health-care services, and less than one third of the working-age population are eligible for a pension in many countries of the region. The participation rate of women in the labour force remains low, at 48 per cent. Only 30 per cent of all persons with disabilities have enough income for self-support.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

24. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Promote analytical studies and policy advocacy to address inequalities, reduce poverty and enhance social protection, including for persons with disabilities, to build socioeconomic resilience;[i]

(b) Continue regional and subregional dialogues to support multisectoral policies, strategies and programmes to implement the 2030 Agenda, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and advance gender equality and women's empowerment;[j]

(c) Address unemployment and underemployment among youth, including by improving the match between the knowledge and skills of youth and labour market demands;[k]

(d) Facilitate regional and subregional dialogue on policies to address population ageing;[l]

(e) Implement the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific;[m]

(f) Strengthen the linkages between international migration and development, including through more effective management of migration.[k]

(b) Disaster risk reduction and resilience

Current status

25. Since 2005, the Asia-Pacific region has recorded almost 60 per cent of total global deaths, 80 per cent of affected people and 45 per cent of total economic damage due to disasters. Currently, over 500 million poor people are living at medium or high disaster risk.[n] Disasters in the region are becoming more complex,

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[h] See General Assembly resolution 70/222.

[i] See E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/4 and Commission resolution 67/8.

[j] See Commission resolution 71/13.

[k] See E/ESCAP/CSD(4)/4.

[l] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/5 and General Assembly resolution 70/164.

[m] See Commission resolution 69/13.

[n] *Disasters without Borders: Regional Resilience for Sustainable Development — Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2015* (ST/ESCAP/2730).

often tending to affect multiple countries, and bring about cascading impacts. Many of these disasters are transboundary in nature, such as floods, El Niño, droughts, tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and sand and dust storms. For instance, the 2015-2016 El Niño affected entire swathes of the Asia-Pacific region, including South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. There is scope for strengthened regional cooperation in relation to specific hazards such as transboundary river basin floods, flash floods, glacial lake outburst floods and landslides.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

26. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Promote effective regional and subregional efforts to strengthen disaster risk modelling, assessment, mapping, monitoring and multi-hazard early warning systems of common and transboundary disasters;[n]

(b) Facilitate regional dialogue and cooperation in integrating disaster risk reduction into related development activities;

(c) Maximize the efficiency of existing regional cooperation mechanisms, including the World Meteorological Organization/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the Regional Cooperative Drought Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning;

(d) Improve analysis to enhance regional knowledge on disaster risk and resilience, promote the wide dissemination of such knowledge, identify challenges and opportunities for data-sharing and provide the analytical basis for regional cooperation;[p]

(e) Promote capacity-building regarding climate resilience, including climate-related disaster risk reduction, through policy dialogues and the sharing of experiences and information;[q]

(f) Develop and implement holistic and participatory disaster risk management at all levels, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2016 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(g) Promote a "Build Back Better" approach in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction, as well as implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, including the Bangkok Principles, with a view to ensuring more systematic cooperation, coherence and integration between disaster and health risk management.[r]

(c) Climate change

Current status

27. Climate change has already taken hold in the Asia-Pacific region. Higher temperatures, the rise in sea level and extreme weather events related to climate change are likely having a major impact on the region, increasing risks to economies and natural and physical assets and potentially compounding

[n] See Commission resolution 71/12.

[p] See E/ESCAP/CDR(4)/6.

[q] See Commission resolution 72/8.

[r] Based on A/71/230, paras. 68 and 69, and priority 2 (f) of the Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, adopted at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2016 (available from www.ndmindia.nic.in/AsiaRegionalPlan.pdf).

development challenges, including with respect to poverty, food and energy security and health. Future climate change in the region may cause more frequent and severe coastal inundation and erosion, salinization, wildfires, heavy precipitation and drought. Climate change is a long-term threat to future generations, and given the significant past growth in greenhouse gas emissions in the region and the potential for an acceleration of that growth in the near future, it is vital that Asia-Pacific countries take strong action to transition to more efficient, low-carbon economies to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. A recent World Bank study estimated that without further climate change adaptation and mitigation action, climate change could force more than 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, many in the Asia-Pacific region.[8] There is a need to enhance finance related to climate change and the capacity of countries in the region to access it.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

28. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Promote capacity-building for climate action through policy dialogue and the sharing of experiences and information by utilizing existing institutions, forums and platforms;

(b) Promote capacity-building of member States regarding climate change, climate resilience, including climate-related disaster risk reduction.

(d) Management of natural resources

Current status

29. As humankind's livelihoods, nutrition and economic opportunities all fundamentally depend upon utilizing the terrestrial and marine resources and ecosystems of our planet, the Asia-Pacific region's continuing survival and prosperity depends on managing these resources to be sustainable. The region consumes more than half of the world's natural resources with increasing rates of absolute resource use and increasing resource use per person. This combination puts pressure on the natural environment and increases the possibilities of irreversible environmental damage, with direct social and economic consequences. At the same time, there is huge potential to improve the resource efficiency of the economies in the region's countries as there are vast variations of resource efficiency between countries. For example, developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region use five times more materials per dollar of gross domestic product than the rest of the world, and 10 times more than industrialized countries in the region.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

30. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Promote policies and strategies with respect to resource efficiency and environmentally sound technologies;

(b) Share experiences and cooperate on management of natural resources including oceans and seas with a view to increasing food security, conserving the environment, protecting biodiversity and enhancing the welfare of the community;

[8] World Bank, "Rapid, climate-informed development needed to keep climate change from pushing more than 100 million people into poverty by 2030", 8 November 2015. Available from www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/11/08/rapid-climate-informed-development-needed-to-keep-climate-change-from-pushing-more-than-100-million-people-into-poverty-by-2030.

(c) Develop and share best practices related to increasing agricultural productivity, sustainable agriculture, food security and rural welfare while reducing negative environmental impacts and degradation of the ecosystem.

(e) Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda

Current status

31. While trade has been a key engine of growth and development, there is growing recognition of the need to make it more inclusive and ensure that its benefits are spread more widely. Transport development has been road-oriented and has not optimized the comparative advantages of each mode of transport from the perspective of the three dimensions of sustainable development, but transport remains a main driver of growth. While transport is the second largest producer of carbon dioxide emissions globally, the sector has the potential to significantly contribute to sustainable development by optimizing the environmental and social comparative advantages of various transport modes. While Internet access is high across the region, there is also a widening digital divide. Improvements in regional connectivity in terms of transport, information and communications technology and trade will boost economic growth and are of critical significance in achieving sustainable development.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

32. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Expand and integrate the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and the network of dry ports to allow maximum modal integration and expansion of connectivity to rural areas; develop and integrate maritime connectivity and implement regional transport facilitation frameworks[t] and other technical standards for operationalizing transport connectivity; develop regional standards including harmonization of technical standards of transport infrastructure, sustainable urban transport index, regional road safety goals, targets and indicators and handbooks on road safety;

(b) Implement the Asia-Pacific information superhighway;[u]

(c) Enable paperless trade and e-commerce and review the current approaches towards regional integration to improve their efficacy, in particular to simplify and harmonize trade and supporting regulations and procedures to make the benefits of trade accessible for all.[v]

(f) Energy

Current status

33. Nearly half a billion people in Asia and the Pacific still lack access to electricity. More than 80 per cent of the countries in the region have targets to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable energy in the region. More than assisting in energy supply needs, renewable sources of energy are receiving further impetus from the climate agenda. While the region has emerged as the producer and provider of most of the world's renewable energy technology, the overall trend within the region is diversification of the domestic energy mix, depending on national and subregional context. Given the uneven distribution of

[t] See the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport and the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport.

[u] See E/ESCAP/CICTSTI(1)/10.

[v] See Commission resolutions 68/3 and 72/4.

energy resources in the Asia-Pacific region and the need for transition of the energy sector towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, there is good scope for coordinated regional action to achieve optimal deployment and utilization of energy resources through enhanced connectivity, economic cooperation and integration.

Opportunities for regional cooperation

34. Opportunities for regional cooperation are to:

(a) Support the work of the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and other regional mandates as well as the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 7;

(b) Promote policy dialogues and networking among member States to develop a regional cooperation framework to enhance energy security, with a view to promoting greater use of sustainable energy resources, including universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, energy services, energy efficiency, advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies and renewable energy as well as energy connectivity, in particular transboundary power trade;[w]

(c) Identify complementary approaches for small-scale energy solutions, including in smaller or remote regions;

(d) Assist in the development of strategies towards attaining internationally agreed development goals on energy.

C. Implementation

35. As noted by the Third Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development,[x] the secretariat will facilitate cooperation among members and associate members of ESCAP under the regional road map, including by doing the following:

(a) Promote multi-stakeholder engagement by facilitating input and views from various stakeholders as appropriate;

(b) Mobilize support from, among other sources, the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations by leveraging the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism and its thematic working groups to play an active role;

(c) Undertake, in consultation with member States, a needs assessment and gap analysis during 2017, if necessary, including mapping of countries that need support in certain areas.

36. The above priority areas of cooperation will be facilitated through the conference structure of the Commission, as well as through existing expertise within ESCAP subprogrammes, the regional institutes and the thematic working groups of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism. Cooperation in these priority areas is also intended to allow member States and the secretariat to contextualize global commitments and national priorities to harmonize dynamic social and economic conditions in the region.

37. Cooperation will be undertaken in coordination with regional and subregional organizations to ensure that activities contribute to subregional priorities, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

38. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is convened annually as an inclusive intergovernmental platform preparatory to the high-level political

[w] See E/ESCAP/CE(1)/8.

[x] E/ESCAP/FSD(3)/4, para. 16 A. (d).

forum on sustainable development and will provide an opportunity for review of and dialogue on the road map. The priority areas of cooperation in this road map are flexible in nature and subject to review and revision. The phases of review of the regional road map may be aligned through the Forum with the four-year cycle of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The relationship between the Forum and the road map will be further defined pending agreement by member States on the form and function of the Forum.

D. Tracking the progress of the regional road map through the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

39. Reviews of progress on implementation of the regional road map will take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, with reference to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. This process will not create additional reporting requirements for member States and will be conducted within existing resources.

40. The review process may include member States and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.

Annex III

Terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

A. Overall functions

1. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is an annual, inclusive intergovernmental forum. It supports preparations for the high-level political forum on sustainable development in the context of both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

2. The Forum will serve as a regional platform for:

(a) Supporting countries, in particular countries with special needs, including through enhancing their capacity for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) Providing a regional perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by identifying regional trends, and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned, taking into account the contributions of other United Nations system bodies at the regional level, other regional and subregional organizations and relevant stakeholders;

(c) Supporting follow-up and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level through: assessing progress and providing opportunities for peer learning related to the theme and goals that will be reviewed at the high-level political forum; supporting the presentation of voluntary national reviews; and undertaking periodic review of progress of the road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

3. These functions will benefit from inter-agency support including through the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism.

B. Conduct of the Forum

4. As part of the conference structure of the Commission, the Forum will be convened annually as an inclusive intergovernmental forum ahead of the high-level political forum. The theme of the Forum should be consistent with that of the high-level political forum and the cluster of goals to be reviewed in-depth should be identical to the cluster of goals under the high-level political forum.

5. The Forum will not get ahead of, or pre-judge, decisions of the high-level political forum, increase the reporting burden of member States or increase the regular budget of the Commission beyond what has already been approved by the General Assembly.

6. The current format, including the election of the bureau for each session, could be maintained and provide space for multi-stakeholder engagement for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in consultation, as appropriate, with member States.

7. The outcome of the Forum will be in the form of a report with a chair's summary annexed to the report.

8. The Forum may consider subregional perspectives on the themes addressed by the Forum. Preparatory meetings of stakeholders may be convened, within existing resources.

9. The Forum, including stakeholder engagement, will be conducted in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission as well as the modalities of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council as long as there is no conflict between them.

10. During each session, a member of the bureau of the previous session could report on the discussions at the intervening high-level political forum and on the conclusions of the previous session of the Forum.

11. The conduct of the Forum will avoid duplication with other regional forums and platforms; in the interest of efficiency, where appropriate, the Forum will be convened in coordination or collaboration with other forums and platforms.

C. Relationship of the Forum with the conference structure of the Commission

12. The report of the Forum as defined in paragraph 7 will be brought to the attention of the subsequent session of the Commission by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Forum.

13. The Forum could receive inputs from the committees that are subsidiary to the Commission as well as other relevant stakeholders.

14. The Forum could benefit from advice provided by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission as a modality for consulting member States between sessions of the Forum.

15. In the years when the high-level political forum meets under the auspices of the General Assembly at the summit level, which is every four years, the Forum may converge with the Commission session in April/May, and the Commission and the Forum will share the same theme, where appropriate. In other years when the high-level political forum meets under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, the Forum shall meet at the senior technical level.

16. If requested by member States, the terms of reference of the Forum may be revised upon recommendation of the Forum and endorsement by the Commission, taking into account new inputs from the high-level political forum and based on periodic review by member States.